U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Accomplishment Report

The **Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO)** is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Great Lakes Big Rivers Region.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Lake Sturgeon Ageing

Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fish and Wildlife Biologist


Photo credit: Adam Kowalski

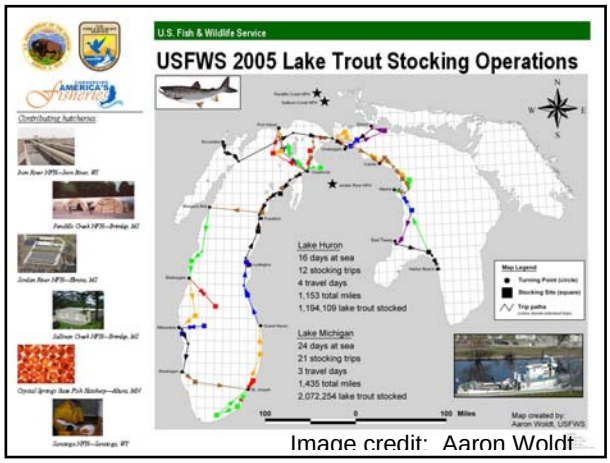
During the month of February, Biologist Adam Kowalski aged lake sturgeon fin rays collected by commercial fishers during their regular fishing seasons. These fishers help collect data from lake sturgeon incidentally caught in their trap nets. Fishers tag the lake sturgeon with tags supplied by the Alpena FRO and record data such as tag number, total length, fork length, girth, water depth, water temp., bottom type, and capture location. Fishers also remove the first pectoral fin ray and send them to Kowalski for ageing.

Aging fin rays requires the ray to be cross sectioned at the base of the ray. This is done with an Isomet saw. The cross section is then mounted on a microscope slide using a mounting medium. Alpena FRO uses Image Pro Plus software which allows a digital camera connected to a dissecting scope to capture images of the cross section and display them on a computer screen for aging. Images are saved and cataloged by year in an archive file. In total, 46 lake sturgeon fin rays were collected and aged for the 2004 and 2005 fishing seasons. Ages and data collected from these lake sturgeon are entered into a database and included in an annual station report.

Commercial fishers have been helping us collected data on a species that is either threatened or endangered in 19 of 20 states of its original range. This collaborative effort is consistent with the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability" priorities of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future

Service Maps 2005 Stocking Trips of M/V Togue

Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist



At the request of Assistant Regional Director Gerry Jackson and Jordan River NFH Manager Rick Westerhof, Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO created a GIS based map of stocking trips made by the M/V Togue in 2005. The M/V Togue, based in Cheboygan, MI, is the Service's offshore stocking vessel used to plant yearling lake trout in US waters of lakes Huron and Michigan in support of interagency lake trout rehabilitation programs.

Biologist Woldt worked with Boat Captain Mike Perry to obtain coordinates for all waypoints and lake trout stocking locations used by the M/V Togue in both lakes Huron and Michigan. Woldt, working with Jordan River NFH Biologist Tim Smigielski, created a map showing M/V Togue trip paths, waypoints, stocking locations, total miles traveled, and total number of lake trout stocked in lakes Huron and Michigan. In 2005, the M/V Togue traveled 1,153 miles in Lake Huron stocking 1,194,109 yearling lake trout and 1,435 miles in Lake Michigan while planting 2,072,254 yearling lake trout. Woldt formatted a poster sized electronic version of this map on the Region 3 poster template and forwarded it to the Regional Office for printing. This map will be used by Region 3 personnel to educate public and Service employees regarding M/V Togue operations and will be displayed at the 2006 GLFC Combined Upper and Lower Lake Committee Meetings. A PowerPoint presentation showing trip by trip stocking operations was also prepared by Woldt and Smigielski and is available for use at outreach events.

This map of 2005 M/V Togue stocking trips will allow the Service to educate public and employees regarding the critical role the Service plays in lake trout rehabilitation efforts. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of implementing educational and outreach activities to educate public regarding Service activities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Public Use" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Meeting to Discuss the Future of the Chesaning Dam

Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist

On February 13, Biologist Wells attended a meeting with interested stakeholders to discuss the retrofit of the Chesaning Dam in Chesaning, Michigan. The City is interested in doing a fish passage retrofit to their dam. The dam is located within a city park on the Shiawassee River and is in danger of failing due to structural compromises at the base and along the shoreline. There are local concerns that complete removal would have an adverse economic impact on the

community as there are several summer activities associated with the pond created by the dam including a popular showboat attraction. Instead, they are proposing a project design entailing the use of a rock ramp to allow for fish passage and restore the structural integrity of the dam.

Representatives from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, Public Sector Consultants, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Wade-Trim were in attendance. Each attendee gave a brief overview of grant opportunities that their organization or others that might help fund this project. The city has successfully begun to solicit private funds that could be used as match towards various grants. This project has strong community support and the representatives involved with the meeting expressed support for the project and a desire to move forward.

This is an example of collaboration between government, watershed groups, and other non-governmental organizations to enhance aquatic habitat which will benefit fish and wildlife resources. This project has the potential to restore fish passage to 37 miles of mainstream and tributary habitat. This project involves collaboration between many partners and addresses the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability".

Partnerships and Accountability

Huron-Erie Corridor Steering Committee Meets

Submitted by Jerry McClain
Fishery Biologist

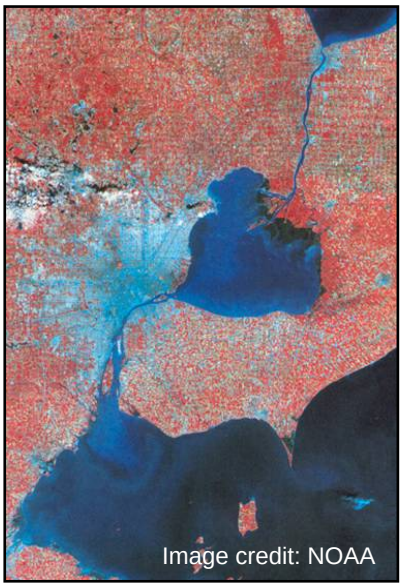


Image credit: NOAA

On February 1, Project Leader McClain and Biologist Jim Boase participated in a meeting of the Huron-Erie Corridor Initiative (HECI) Steering Committee in Ann Arbor. The HECI was initially proposed in 2005 by the U.S. Geological Survey-Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) to initiate and expand collaboration and develop a partnership effort to help prioritize research activities in this important Great Lakes waterway.

The Huron-Erie Corridor (HEC) includes the southern main basin of Lake Huron, the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the western basin of Lake Erie. Currently there are roughly 40 species of fish that utilize the HEC for some part of their life cycle. Historically, the HEC provided critical spawning and nursery habitat for numerous native fish species, many of which are now in a significantly depleted state. As development occurred along the HEC, habitat alteration resulted in the loss of much of this important habitat and the hydraulic characteristics of the system have been greatly altered. It is felt that much of the spawning habitat for native species such as lake sturgeon and lake whitefish have been lost to dredging and channelization for the movement of commercial shipping through the HEC. In addition, much of the nursery habitat

that existed within the channel and at the mouth of the Detroit River is no longer available to larval fish as they drift out of the system.

A Steering Committee was established to help guide efforts to identify priority habitat restoration and fishery research needs in the HEC. Currently there are nearly 20 members to the Steering Committee representing federal, state, provincial, tribal and local governments, as well as university and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). McClain represents the Service's Fisheries Program on the Steering Committee and Boase serves as the alternate. The Alpena FRO participates in numerous fishery research and management projects within the HEC in partnership with the GLSC and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Boase has a lead role for several lake sturgeon restoration projects in the waterway.

Due to the importance of the HEC to the fisheries in the region, the extensive habitat concerns and issues associated with the system, and the large partnership that continues to grow in the region, McClain has proposed the HECI as a candidate for the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI). McClain provided a Power Point presentation to the Steering Committee and other participants at the February meeting to explain the history and purpose of the NFHI and to propose the HECI as a candidate for funding consideration in FY 2007 and beyond. There was unanimous support for the proposal and McClain will be working with Sandra Morrison of the GLSC to develop a draft proposal for Steering Committee review.

A partnership effort to address fishery habitat issues on a geographic scale is consistent with the core principals of the National Fish Habitat Initiative and is essential for effective protection, enhancement and restoration of native species. A large and growing partnership effort to guide restoration and management efforts in the Huron-Erie Corridor could lead to recovery of several depleted and listed finfish and shell fish populations in this critically important watershed. Service participation in this partnership effort and membership on the Steering Committee is consistent and supportive of the "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priorities of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Lake Sturgeon Coordination Meeting

Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist

On February 23, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to Sault St. Marie, MI, to meet with partners, cooperators, and interview candidates for a Student Temporary Experience Program (STEP) position for the lake sturgeon work scheduled to take place on the St. Marys River during the 2006 field season. Fishery Biologist Koproski was awarded a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to assess lake sturgeon in the St. Marys River. The St. Marys River is the connecting waterway between Lake Superior and the Lower Great Lakes. The project includes partnerships with Lake Superior State University, Bay Mills Indian Community, the Soo Area Sportsmen, and eight volunteers all of which have donated their time and a vessel to this project.

Funding awarded from the NFWF will be used to capture and implant sonic telemetry tags in lake sturgeon utilizing the St. Marys River. Anecdotal information indicates that lake sturgeon were commonly encountered in the St. Marys River. However, very little is currently known about population size, available habitat, and spawning locations within this system. By capturing and following these fish we may be able to provide more definitive answers for researchers and managers. Without the help of the partners, volunteers, and the NFWF this project would not be possible.

This work is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Partnerships and Accountability", and "Cooperation with Native Americans".

Cooperation with Native Americans

Service and State Update Lake Trout Stock Assessment Models in 1836 Treaty Waters of Lake Huron

Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist

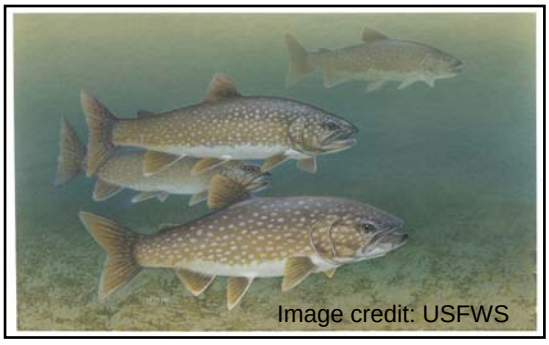


Image credit: USFWS

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO and Ji He of the Michigan DNR updated lake trout statistical-catch-at-age (SCAA) models for 1836 Treaty waters of Lake Huron. Each year the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) is charged by the Year 2000 Consent Decree with updating stock assessment models for lake trout and lake whitefish in 1836 Treaty waters and producing safe harvest limits. The Year 2000 Consent Decree is a 20 year fishery allocation agreement for 1836 Treaty waters signed by the State of Michigan, United States, Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.

There are two lake trout SCAA models for 1836 Treaty waters in Lake Huron. The MH-1 (north-western Lake Huron) model includes statistical district MH-1 in US waters and management area 4-1 in adjacent Canadian waters. The MH-2 (north-central Lake Huron) model includes statistical district MH-2 in US waters and management areas 4-2, 4-3, and 4-7 in adjacent Canadian waters.

Woldt, along with He, added 2005 commercial harvest, recreational harvest, biological survey, and stocking data to the Lake Huron models. Woldt and He began analyzing model output, performing diagnostic tests of the models' performance, and produced preliminary 2006 harvest estimates for the state-licensed recreational fishery and the tribal commercial fishery. Woldt and He will present these preliminary model results and harvest limits at the March 14-16 meeting of the MSC. Woldt and He will perform additional model diagnostics on the Lake Huron lake trout

models, make changes where necessary, and further refine the preliminary harvest limits prior to presenting these limits to the TFC on March 31.

Model results from these analyses will determine 2006 lake trout harvest limits for both the state-licensed recreational fishery and the tribal commercial fishery in 1836 Treaty waters of Lake Huron. The harvest limits produced will allow fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake trout stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", "Cooperation with Native Americans", and "Partnerships and Accountability" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Public Use

Celebrating the Winter Season at WinterFest

Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist


Photo credit: Susan Wells

Biologist Wells participated in the Sprinkler Lake Education Center's annual WinterFest on February 11. The event was a day long winter fun festival at the Sprinkler Lake Education Center in Harrisville, Michigan. There were interactive science displays, dog sled rides, crafts, and a petting zoo. The Alpena FRO provided a booth at the event with educational material, fish puzzles, and partnered with the Pine River Watershed Coalition to operate an interactive watershed model. The model depicts the path of sediments, and pollutants after a rain event when buffers such as trees and wetlands are lost. Approximately 700 children and adults visited the booth. The festival allowed the Alpena FRO the opportunity to fulfill one of the station goals of distributing information to the general public about fish and wildlife resources, natural ecosystems and programs of the Service.

This accomplishment was an educational and outreach opportunity. We were able to showcase the Service to the public and educate people on the aquatic resources available in the Great Lakes. Approximately 700 people visited the Alpena FRO fisheries booth and display providing an outlet to educate and interact with children on issues regarding Great Lakes aquatic resources. This event addressed the Fisheries Vision priority for "Public Use".

Fur, Fish, Fun & 4-H

Submitted by Susan Wells
Fishery Biologist

On February 8, Biologists Wells presented information on Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration to 60 seventh grade students at the 4-H Fish, Fur, Fish, and Fun day. The event was hosted by the Michigan State University Extension and Rogers City School District. The presentation provided information on causes of aquatic habitat deterioration and emphasized activities people can do to reduce or eliminate these causes. Examples of aquatic habitat restoration techniques were highlighted including the use of biodegradable coir logs and filter fabric to reduce sedimentation in streams. Each of the students were given a chance to handle these fabrics and given materials describing the importance of habitat to aquatic organisms.

This accomplishment was an educational and outreach opportunity. We were able to showcase the USFWS and the Alpena FRO and educate young students on the importance of restoring and preserving aquatic habitat in the Great Lakes. Approximately 60 students and 5 adults attended the event. This event addressed the Fisheries Vision priority for "Public Use".

Workforce Management

Alpena FRO Receives Employee Security Awareness Training

Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist

Staff at the Alpena FRO received training in Employee Security Awareness on February 15. The required safety and security training was provided by U.S. Coast Guard Alpena Station Chief Brad Adams. Training focused on general security concerns and procedures surrounding federal property and emergency preparedness. Training better equips personnel with an understanding of what should be done in the event of a security emergency and efforts that should be undertaken for employees to protect themselves, fellow staff, and federal property. This training meets Service Safety requirements and Fishery responsibilities for the "Workforce Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report
February 2006

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alpena FRO
145 Water Street, Alpena, MI 49707

Phone: 989/356-5102

For more information on Alpena FRO programs and activities or to view other station reports visit our website located at http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/.